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Styles of Student Adaptation:

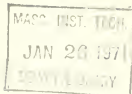
Outcomes of the Psychological Contract

Working Paper #536-71

~~January 1971~~

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STYLES OF STUDENT ADAPTATION: OUTCOMES OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTRACT

The Concept of Adaptive Style

From the moment a student enters a university, and throughout his years there, he undergoes a complex and unending process of socialization. This process takes many forms which vary in formality, strength and origin. In general, individual differences in background, expectations, and personality coupled with variations in the socializing mechanisms that each student experiences produce differences in adaptation to the university environment.

The purpose of this paper is the examination of some generalized adaptive patterns of M.I.T. freshmen. This task becomes, in part, that of reducing the myriad individual adaptive patterns to a manageable number which preserve the characteristics of the individuals under study. To accomplish this objective we have developed four adaptive styles from the work of Merton (1957), Parsons (1951) and McKelvey (1967).

The four styles may be typologized using two dimensions. The first indicates whether the individual is satisfied or dissatisfied with the environment, while the second reflects whether the expression of these feelings is active or passive. The four styles are: withdrawn, or negative and passive; rebellious, or negative and active; conformist, or positive and passive; and self-directed, or positive and active.¹

Adaptation may be studied in two overlapping ways. On the one hand, it is an outcome of the complex interactions of individual and environment. It is the outcome of the way an individual copes with the differences between his expectations

¹The other authors' terminology is slightly different. McKelvey, for example, uses: retreatist, or passive cynic; insurgent, or active cynic; ritualist, or passive idealist; and crusader, or active idealist.

and the reality he perceives. Conceptually, the cluster of individual expectations and organizational responses combine to form a "psychological contract."

Adaptive style is one result of this contract. On the other hand, adaptive style can be viewed as an independent variable which specifically relates to other variables such as performance and satisfaction.

Figure 1 summarizes these two views of adaptation and also shows their relationship to one another. Individual factors and organizational factors combine to form the psychological contract (see Rubin, 1971 for a further explanation of the psychological contract). Adaptive style, in turn, is an outcome of this cluster of mutual expectations. Finally, the outcomes of adaptive style are seen as performance, satisfaction and feeling states which represent attitudes towards various aspects of one's organizational experience.

This paper, as part of a larger research effort, examines the relationships between adaptive style and performance, satisfaction and three psychological feeling states. Viewing adaptive style as an independent variable is merely a convenience. We believe that the relationships which exist in figure 1 are dynamic and change over time. Kolb (1971), in another paper, comments on the dynamic nature of these relationships. In addition, for the purposes of this paper, the process by which individuals develop adaptive styles and the ways these styles change over time will not be discussed in detail. At this point, we are only exploring whether adaptive style is a meaningful way to group individual patterns of response to the university environment by examining whether it allows us to differentiate along certain important dimensions.

In specific, adaptive style is studied as follows:

1. Four adaptive styles have been defined using descriptions based on the work of McKelvey.

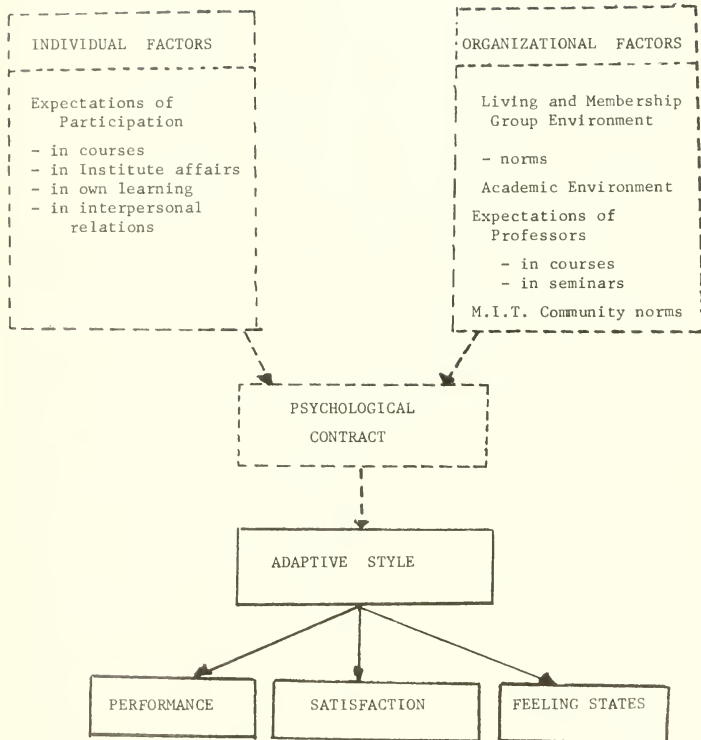


Figure 1.

2. These styles are compared as to their relative success in a variety of ways: a) each style is compared to the freshman advisors' opinions of the general characteristics of students seen to be successful or unsuccessful at M.I.T.; b) the advisors' estimates of the success of their advisees is compared for the four styles; c) grade point average and units taken by students of different styles will be examined; and d) individual opinions as to whether they would choose M.I.T., if selecting a university again, will be contrasted for the four styles.

3. The study examines the relationships between adaptive style and three psychological feeling states and possible explanations for the associations are given.

4. Implications for the future socialization of individuals exhibiting each adaptive style are briefly noted.

Method

1. Freshman Questionnaire

A questionnaire consisting of eighty-eight items was distributed to all members of the M.I.T. class of 1973 in February, 1970. Responses were obtained from 45 per cent of this sample. The items on the questionnaire explored attitudes toward residence groups and the larger M.I.T. community as well as the feeling states discussed below.

To measure respondents' disenchantment or cynicism with the political aspects of M.I.T., Olsen's (1969) political alienation scale was adapted for use with M.I.T. students. To measure normlessness and lack of meaning, McClosky and Schaar's (1965) Anomie Scale was used. Rotter's (1966) forced choice instrument, designed to measure the extent to which a person feels responsible for what happens to him, was adapted as a measure of sense of personal responsibility. These scales were included in order to determine whether difficulties in adaptation could be

systematically related to attitudes of political alienation, anomie and sense of control over one's own destiny.

Each scale was modified to conform to six point Likert format with answers ranging from complete agreement to complete disagreement. Item content was modified to relate specifically to M.I.T. The data were then factor analyzed into² six factors, three of which will be utilized in this research report. The items included and the scale names appear in Table 1.

2. Freshman Advisor Questionnaire

The respondents' faculty advisors were asked to fill in a questionnaire at approximately the same time as the respondents. Forty per cent responded producing a maximum overlap with the freshman sample of 191 respondents. The advisors' questionnaire asked them to do three things: first, to list the characteristics of the most successful and least successful students they have known at M.I.T.; second, to rate their own advisees on a scale of 1 to 10 of estimated success using their own listed descriptions as anchor points; and third, to rank the four paragraphs below in terms of the paragraph that was the best, next best, etc. description of that advisee (see Table 2).

3. Grades and Units

To obtain measures of success in addition to faculty estimates we examine grades from the third term and total units accumulated as of that point.

4. Student Overall Satisfaction

Respondents were asked to answer the following question which we have taken

²The factors which emerge from the factor analysis are slightly different from the input dimensions developed by Rotter, Olsen and McClosky and Schaar.

Table 1

Quest No. Political Alienation

- 71 It seems to me that M.I.T. often fails to take necessary actions on important matters even when most people favor such actions.
- 70 For the most part M.I.T. serves the interests of a few organized groups and isn't very concerned about the needs of people like myself.
- 72 As M.I.T. is now, I think it is hopelessly incapable of dealing with all the crucial problems facing the university today.
- 58 M.I.T. is run by the few people in power and there is not much the student can do about it.
- 59 It is difficult for people to have much control over the things officials do in office.
- 69 These days M.I.T. is trying to do too many things, including some activities that I don't think it has a right to do.

Anomie

- 62 With everything in such a state of disorder at M.I.T., it's hard for a student to know where he stands.
- 66 I often feel awkward and out of place at M.I.T.
- 61 What is lacking in the university today is the kind of friendship that lasts for a lifetime.
- 68 It seems to me that other students at M.I.T. find it easier to decide what is right than I do.
- 67 Students were better off in the days when everybody knew just how he was expected to act.
- 63 Everything changes so quickly these days at M.I.T. that I often have trouble deciding which are the right rules to follow.
- 65 The trouble with the university today is that most people don't believe in anything.

Personal Responsibility

- 45 In my case getting what I want at M.I.T. has little or nothing to do with luck.
- 43 It is impossible for me to believe that chance or luck plays an important role in my life at M.I.T.
- 31 Becoming a success is a matter of hard work. Luck has little or nothing to do with it.
- 50 M.I.T. students' misfortunes result from the mistakes they make.
- 28 There is really no such thing as luck in the university setting.
- 27 What happens to me at M.I.T. is my own doing.
- 49 There is a direct connection between how hard I study and the grades I get.
- 48 The average student can have an influence in institute's decisions.
- 57 In the long run, students at M.I.T. get the respect they deserve.

Table 2

Paragraph descriptions of different adaptive styles

- (Withdrawn) socially isolated, not identified with any sub-group within the institute; feels powerless to direct his own life within the institute; very deferent to authority; seems anxious; sleeps a lot; misses a lot of classes; does not respond to your initiative to help; confused, no clear goals.
- (Rebel) vocal in expressing objectives or constraints; extremely sure of his own ideas; ignores rules if they don't suit his purposes; self-oriented; does not build on others; ideas; high energy level focussed against the system; quietly hostile; zealous in promotion of his own ideas; clear goals, but no clear means of achieving them.
- (Conformist) punctual; reliable; predictable; evenness of temperament and mood; tuned in to what is appropriate; hard worker; does his work, but does not generate new ideas; does what is expected of him.
- (Self-Directed) clear goals or ideas of what he wants to accomplish; understands system well enough to use it effectively; persistent; high energy level focused within the system; asks questions, inquiring; self-starter, self-directed.

Note: The labels in parentheses did not appear on the faculty questionnaire.

as summarizing a student's overall satisfaction with M.I.T.:

If you could choose a university all over again, knowing what you know now about M.I.T., would you choose to come here?

1. Definitely yes
2. Probably yes
3. Undecided
4. Probably not
5. Definitely not

Results and Discussion

1. Descriptions of Successful and Unsuccessful Students

A collation of the faculty responses to the open-ended portion of the advisor questionnaire appears in Table 3. Over half of the advisors saw ability, intelligence, intellectual motivation, and interest in academic pursuits as characteristics of the successful student. In addition, a sense of identity, confidence, clear goals, taking initiative, and hard work appeared in over one third of the lists as positive characteristics. On the unsuccessful list, appeared infantile emotional development, depression, lack of motivation, lack of direction, and identity crisis. Interpersonal relationships appeared on both lists: the student seen as successful was perceived as having friends, while the student seen as unsuccessful was more likely to be seen as socially isolated.

Comparison of Table 3 with the adaptive style descriptions (Table 2) indicates that the characteristics of the students seen as successful correspond most nearly to the self-directed type while the characteristics of the students seen as unsuccessful are most similar to the withdrawn type. In other words, the faculty sample associate characteristics of our self-directed type with high success at M.I.T. while the characteristics of the withdrawn type are associated with low success.

2. Adaptive style vs. Faculty Estimate of Success

The association between the advisors' ranking of their freshmen's adaptive style and the Faculty Estimate of Success (the measure of expected success at M.I.T. based on the similarity of the freshman to the characteristics of most and least successful students) is shown in Table 4. The advisees were classified by the description which the advisor assigned as most descriptive of that student.

Table 3. Freshman Faculty Advisors' Descriptions of Characteristics of Successful and Unsuccessful M.I.T. Students

The Successful Student	% mentioned	The Unsuccessful Student	% mentioned
Native ability, intelligence	55	Infantile emotional development, anxious, depressed, emotional problems	44
Intellectual motivation, interest in academic pursuits	53	Lack of motivation	40
Sense of identity, clear-cut goals, self-confident	42	Identity crisis, confused, little direction	35
Takes initiative, independent study	35	Poor interpersonal relationships, no friends, socially isolated	29
High energy level, drive, works hard	35	"Goof off," lazy, lax	25
Good interpersonal relationships, has friends	27	Learning problems	18
Extracurricular activities, campus leader	27	Not involved in institute, doesn't belong to M.I.T.	14
Mature, happy, well-adjusted	20	Closed to others, unable to accept feedback or help	13
Dependable, reliable, thorough, diligent, well organized	15	Lack of native ability, intelligence	13
Good faculty relationships, knows how to work with faculty & admin.	15	Poor grades, failed courses	11
Creative, imaginative	13	No drive, sleeps a lot, vegetates	11
Good grades, does well in courses	13	Problems in family or high school background	11
Wide range of interests	11	Not involved in extracurricular activities	7
Involved in the institute	7	Poor faculty relationships, rebels against authority	7
Open to new ideas & experiences, receives feedback & help	5	Dull	7
Good learner	5	No scientific interest or ability	5
Sets high standards for self, seeks to excell, ambitious	5	Lack of initiative or independent study	4
Scientific ability & interests	4		
Articulate, expresses self well	4		
Good family & high school background	4		

Table 4.

Faculty Estimate of Success vs. Rated Adaptive Style

Adaptive	Mean FES	SD
Withdrawn (N=15)	3.86 _*	1.76
Rebel (N=20)	5.20 _*	2.14
Conformist (N=69)	6.33 _{***}	1.59
Self-Directed (N=65)	7.73	1.75
Total Population (N=169)	6.15	2.08

Differences between adjacent categories significant:
_{*}p <.05, _{**} p <.01, _{***}p<.001 (t-test, 2 tail)

Note: This notation for probability levels will be used throughout the paper unless otherwise indicated.

The table contains several results. Of the 169 respondents for which we have adaptive style and faculty estimate of success data, 40.8 per cent were seen as most like the "conformist" description, 38.5 per cent most like the "self-directed," 11.8 per cent most like the "rebel," and 8.9 per cent most like the "withdrawn." In addition to being fewer in number, the students seen as rebels or withdrawn have lower estimated success scores, that is, they are seen as less likely to succeed at M.I.T. The conformists in the sample tend to cluster around the mean of the total population, while the self-directed are significantly higher. Thus, the faculty ratings tend to be consistent with the content of the open-ended descriptions of successful and unsuccessful students -- the students seen as similar to the self-directed description rated as most likely to succeed while those seen similar to the withdrawn are least likely to succeed.

Let us next look at some measures of success that are independent of the faculty ratings. Once again, we will contrast the groups of freshmen on the basis of the adaptive style description their advisors saw as most characteristic of them.

3. Adaptive Style and Institutional Success Measures

The two measures of success to be used in this section are grade point average and units accumulated. Both were collected at the end of the respondents' third term at M.I.T., one year after the adaptive style data were collected from the advisors.³ The results are reported in Table 5.

Table 5

Grade point average and units accumulated at the end of three terms vs. rated adaptive style

Adaptive style	GPA	SD	Units	SD
Withdrawn (n=10)	3.92	.665	135.2	22.6
Rebel (n=12)	4.01	.665	143.2	32.2
Conformist (n=61)	4.02	.779	153.4	23.2
Self-Directed (n=53)	4.30*	.589	166.6***	25.9

Note: Sample size varies as a result of incomplete data as well as students leaving M.I.T.

The trend in both measures further supports the finding that the adaptive styles can be ranked as withdrawn, rebel, conformist, self-directed in terms of likelihood of success. The self-directed group, in particular, stands out as more successful on both measures.

The similarity of the relationships among faculty estimate of success, grade point average, and units accumulated indicates that these measures should be intercorrelated. This is so. Faculty estimate of success correlates .49 (Pearson) with units accumulated and .29 with grade point average. Units accumulated and grade point average correlate .49.

³ M.I.T. freshmen are graded pass/fail. Therefore, faculty ratings collected after the first term could not have been influenced by grade point average.

4. Adaptive Style and Personal Satisfaction

The last measure of the degree of successful adaptation to M.I.T. is a question relating to the student's overall feelings about life at M.I.T. after one semester. Specifically, the question asked the respondent if he would choose M.I.T., if able to select a college over again. The relationship of this measure to adaptive style is tabulated in Table 6.

Table 6.

Choose M.I.T. Again vs. Rated Adaptive Style

Adaptive Style	Definitely yes	Probably yes	Undecided, Probably not or Definitely not	TOTALS
Withdrawn	15%	46%	39%	100% (13)
Rebel	35%	12%	53%	100% (17)
Conformist	43%	36%	21%	100% (63)
Self-directed	60%	23%	17%	100% (58)

$$p < .01, \chi^2, df = 6$$

Looking at the "definitely yes" column, we can see that the order: withdrawn, rebel, conformist, self-directed is related to satisfaction with M.I.T. It seems clear that adaptive style, as related by the faculty, is a useful way to measure both success and satisfaction during the early semesters at M.I.T.

Let us now look at the students' side of the process. Specifically, how do students with different adaptive styles describe their feelings along the dimensions of political alienation, personal responsibility and anomie?

5. Adaptive Style and Feelings of Alienation

As a brief preface to the examination of the relationship between adaptive style and political alienation, personal responsibility and anomie, a further explanation of these dimensions is given below.

Political Alienation refers to the powerlessness one experiences when unable to exert sufficient control over the destiny and behavior of the larger community. The extremely politically alienated student would feel that M.I.T. "fails to take necessary actions on important matters even when most people favor such actions," and M.I.T. "serves the interests of a few organized groups and isn't very concerned about the needs of people like myself." In general, the politically alienated respondent feels that M.I.T. is not organized to, capable of, or interested in serving his interests or needs.

Personal Responsibility measures the extent to which an individual feels that what happens to him is a result of his own efforts. Low personal responsibility represents a breakdown of expected means-ends relationships and can be viewed as the psychological equivalent of the sociological concept of powerlessness (Rotter, 1967, p. 20). High personal responsibility can be exemplified by agreement with: "Becoming a success is a matter of hard work. Luck has little or nothing to do with it."

Anomie, the third scale, measures feelings of normlessness and social isolation. In specific, the disintegration of lack of norms, values and beliefs is indicated by strong agreement with statements such as: "The trouble with the university today is that most people don't believe in anything." In addition, feelings of normlessness are exacerbated by rapid change and turmoil (Barakat, 1969), e.g., "With everything in such a state of disorder at M.I.T., it's hard for a student to know where he stands" and "Everything changes so quickly these days at M.I.T. that I often have trouble deciding which are the right rules to follow."

Another aspect of the anomie dimension is the feeling of isolation: "I often feel awkward and out of place at M.I.T." and "What is lacking in the university today is the kind of friendship that lasts for a lifetime." These feelings of isolation are likely to occur as individuals shift away from membership in cohesive groups (Barakat, 1969).

Table 7 demonstrates the relationship between these three alienation dimensions and the concept of adaptive style.

Table 7.
Alienation Scores vs. Adaptive Style

Adaptive Style	Political Alienation	Anomie	Personal Responsibility
Withdrawn	3.62 (HIGH)	2.90 (HIGH)	3.93 (HIGH)
Rebel	* 4.33 (HIGH)	2.73 (HIGH)	3.39 (LOW)
Conformist	3.28 (LOW)	2.80 (HIGH)	3.93 (HIGH)
Self-Directed	3.29 (LOW)	** 2.38 (LOW)	3.99 (HIGH)
Total Population	3.43	2.64	3.86

Table 7 shows that political alienation, the dimension representing institutional powerlessness, differentiates the withdrawn and rebellious types from the conformists and self-directed. In other words, political alienation differentiates those groups that were found to be seen as less likely to succeed and less satisfied from the two groups that are seen as more likely to succeed and who report greater overall satisfaction.

In addition, Table 7 indicates other characteristics of the adaptive styles. Rebels and withdrawals are both highly anomic in addition to their high political alienation. They differ, however, in two ways: first, the rebels are more politically alienated than the withdrawn and second, they exhibit less personal responsibility.⁴ In other words, the rebels are very politically alienated, anomic, and

⁴ $p \leq .06$, t-test.

experiencing external control while the withdrawn are politically alienated, anomic, and more likely to believe that what happens to them is a result of their own efforts.

The conformists and the self-directed differ from one another in only one respect: the conformists are more anomic than the self-directed. Therefore, the following portraits emerge: the conformist, although relatively happy vis-a-vis the community and experiencing control over what happens to him is, nevertheless, feeling normless and/or socially isolated. On the other hand, the self-directed student has a sense of values, purpose and a feeling of belonging.

6. Feelings of Alienation within Adaptive Styles

In an earlier research report (Rubin, et al, 1970), the direct relationships between the three feeling states and the faculty estimate of success were examined. Overall, political alienation and personal responsibility are related to faculty estimate of success, while anomie is not. In view of the relationships between adaptive style and both faculty estimate of success and the alienation dimensions just presented, it was thought that the measures of alienation might be more strongly related to the faculty estimate of success within certain adaptive styles.

Table 8 shows the relationship between political alienation and faculty estimate of success for each adaptive style. Ignoring differences based on small n's, lower political alienation is still associated with higher success for all of the groups. However, the relationship is stronger for rebels and conformists but not for withdrawn and self-directed students. Table 9 indicates that the relationship between faculty estimate of success and personal responsibility is stronger for rebels and self-directed and weaker for those labeled as conformists or withdrawn.

The relationship between anomie and faculty estimate of success, as shown in Table 10, is even less clear. The overall curvilinearity is preserved for conformist and self-directed types. Low anomie is associated with both low and high esti-

Table 8
 Political Alienation vs. Faculty Estimate of Success for
 each Adaptive Style

		Political Alienation Scores			
		Withdrawn	Rebel	Conformist	Self-Directed
Faculty Estimate of Success	LOW (1-5)	3.70 (9)	4.87 (9)	3.55 (25)	3.56 (6)
	MED (6,7)	3.39 (3)	3.55 (7)	3.26 (21)	3.23 (16)
	HIGH (8-10)	(0)	5.00 (1)	2.93 (18)	3.27 (36)

Table 9
 Personal Responsibility vs. Faculty Estimate of
 for each Adaptive Style

		Personal Responsibility Scores			
		Withdrawn	Rebel	Conformist	Self-Directed
Faculty Estimate of Success	LOW (1-5)	3.93 (9)	3.11 (9)	3.80 (25)	3.46 (6)
	MED (6,7)	3.93 (3)	3.80 (7)	3.95 (21)	4.13 (16)
	HIGH (8-10)		3.00 (1)	4.08 (18)	4.03 (36)

Table 10
 Anomie vs. Faculty Estimate of Success for
 each Adaptive Style

		Anomie Scores			
		Withdrawn	Rebel	Conformist	Self-Directed
Faculty Estimate of Success	LOW (1-5)	2.92 (9)	2.72 (9)	2.60 (25)	1.59 (6)
	MED (6,7)	2.83 (3)	2.81 (7)	3.03 (21)	2.77 (16)
	HIGH (8-10)		2.17 (1)	2.80 (18)	2.33 (36)

mated success and high anomie is associated with moderate estimated success.

Further investigation has shown that the explanation of the curvilinear relationship of anomie to the faculty estimate of success is very complex. It involves the introduction of involvement with membership group, residence, and re-interpretation of the meaning of the faculty estimate of success. Uncovering the sources of anomie seems important enough and the analysis interesting enough to merit separate attention. Therefore, this analysis is covered in a separate paper: "Investigating Anomie: Sources of Normlessness and Value Conflict for the M.I.T. Freshman," Gerstein, forthcoming.

Conclusions and Implications

Starting with descriptions of four generalized adaptive patterns, this paper has shown several things about freshman adaptation to M.I.T. First, freshmen faculty advisors see the most successful students they have known as possessing many of the characteristics of what we have termed self-directed. The advisors also see the least successful students they have known in terms that are similar to our withdrawn type. Their estimates of success for freshman bear out their descriptions -- self-directed advisees are seen as most likely to succeed while withdrawn advisees are seen as the least likely to succeed in the eyes of their faculty advisors.

Second, we find the faculty adaptive style ratings to be related to grade point average and total units accumulated at the end of the third semester as well as to our measure of overall satisfaction at M.I.T. (measured at the end of the first semester), with the self-directed students highest on all three measures.

Third, the adaptive styles are different from one another in the combinations and degree of political alienation, personal responsibility, and anomie which the freshmen report. Rebel and withdrawn types are both politically alienated (rebels

more so) and highly anomic. However, the withdrawn are slightly more personally responsible. Conformists and self-directed types, who comprise the bulk of the population, are low in political alienation and high in personal responsibility.

These three feeling states differ within adaptive styles as well as across them. Decreased political alienation and increased personal responsibility seem generally associated with increased faculty estimate of success. Anomie, however, was shown to be curvilinearly related to faculty estimate of success.

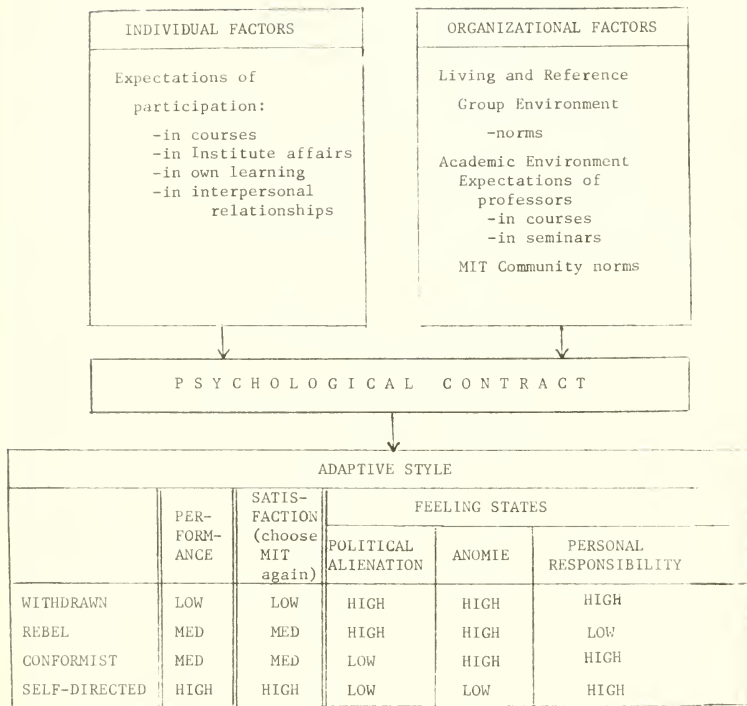
Anomie is a measure of several things: it is related to confusion as to the norms of a social system; it is related to feelings of isolation, and to feelings of lack of purpose or meaning. In general, it is probably related to being meaningfully "connected" to a group. It may be that most freshmen decide whether to be highly involved with a group of peers or to be interested in the academic pursuits highly valued by the faculty.

The relationships among all the variables discussed in the paper are presented schematically in Figure 2. The individual and organizational factors combine to form the psychological contract, whose outcome is adaptive style. Adaptive style is related to performance, satisfaction and to the feeling states of political alienation, anomie and personal responsibility.

Adaptive style has implications that extend beyond the areas of academic performance and interpersonal behavior. An individual's adaptive style will have influence on future learning and further socialization. As a conclusion to this paper, some implications about the future socialization of typical adaptive styles are explored below.

The withdrawn students, alienated from the larger institution and lacking a sense of direction, meaning and purpose, but nevertheless having faith in the fruits of their labors, have adapted by "going it alone." Withdrawal is a natural consequence of the unique combination of high institutional and group alienation coupled

Figure 2.



with high personal responsibility. The withdrawn have retreated from the social system rather than comply or fight back.

The implications of this adaptive behavior are clear. Retreat reinforces feelings of isolation and vastly reduces the likelihood that the norms of the system will ever be learned. In addition, since influence on the larger system is best accomplished through group efforts, it is unlikely that perceptions of efficacy vis-à-vis the larger system will be improved. In effect, withdrawal has neutralized the efforts of the system to socialize the individual--and unless the individual can be brought back into the system's mainstream, feelings of alienation and low success are likely to continue.

The rebel and self-directed types are both active. They are engaged in activities aimed at changing the system. Barakat (1969), in discussing the outcomes of alienation refers to individuals similar to our self-directed and rebels. The former group, he says, "invent ways, ideas, and means to save themselves and others from despair," while the latter "engage in activities aimed at destroying the system rather than improving it." From the initial adaptive style descriptions, we have characterized the rebel as a vocal, but ineffective change agent and the self-directed has been characterized as a person capable of using the system effectively.

The ineffectiveness of the rebellious style seems both a cause and a consequence of his behavior. If the energy presently manifested in hostility could be utilized within the system to produce meaningful change for the rebels, then the present feelings of political alienation and low personal responsibility could be reduced. In addition, as the individual becomes involved with and integrated into groups which he sees as beneficial to his own ends, the present feelings of isolation and lack of meaning should disappear.

Within the conformist type we can hypothesize two sub-groups. The first does not perceive anything wrong -- things are as they should be. Conformity is a natural outcome of agreement with the norms they perceive. Another type, however, is the individual who complies publicly, but not privately with the demands and expectations of the system. He behaves in accordance with the norms of the system without internalizing them. This type is similar to Merton's ritualist: that individual who accepts the means but not the goals of the social system. Ritualists tend to "play it safe," preferring to lower expectations rather than risk failure.

The feelings of anomie, the lack of meaning, purpose, the confusion, that are exhibited by this group are likely outcomes of a possible lack of internalization of the norms they obey. The tension associated with their feelings seems to have been buried, not eliminated.

Perhaps a way to reduce the anomie of the ritualist-conformer is to allow him to become better integrated into a peer group. We know that the dormitories tend to be lonely places (Sussman, 1960). Perhaps the newer dormitories, designed to facilitate interaction and foster more of a sense of community, will reduce the anomie of this part of the M.I.T. community.

We have known for some time that adjustment to M.I.T. is difficult for some freshmen (Sussman, 1960; Snyder, 1971). In this paper, we have described some different patterns of adjusting, or adapting to this social system. We find that some patterns are successful, while others are less so in terms of performance, satisfaction and estimates of success on the part of advisors. We also find that the identifiable styles of adaptation differ in the subjective feelings of the freshmen who comprise our sample. We have briefly explored some of the likely outcomes of the characteristic behaviors of the adaptive styles for future socialization. What remains is to design and implement new opportunities, new structures,

and new training to enable individuals to reduce their feelings of political alienation and anomie, and increase their feelings of control over their destiny so that they can benefit most from their four years at M.I.T.



